

# HOW CHRISTMAS CAME TO THE MULVANEYS



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COSY CORNER SERIES



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MULVANEYS

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“OH, YOU MUST BE THE YOUNGSTERS I’M LOOKING FOR!” (See page 90)



Cosy Corner Series

# HOW CHRISTMAS CAME TO THE MULVANEYS

By

Frances Margaret Fox

Author of

"Farmer Brown and the Birds," "Little Lady Marjorie,"  
"Betty of Old Mackinaw," etc.

*Illustrated by*

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TO  
MY "LITTLE COUSINS"  
**Ruth Frances Higgins**  
AND  
**William Crouch Higgins**  
WHOSE COMMENTS AND CRITICISMS  
HELPED TELL THE STORY





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# HOW CHRISTMAS CAME TO THE MULVANEYS



## CHAPTER I.

### THE MULVANEYS

MRS. MULVANEY didn't look like a woman who played the piano from morning until night. To be sure she wore elbow-sleeves, low-necked dresses, and carried her head with pride.

The neighbours laughed when Mrs. Mulvaney spoke of her piano, but the seven little ones dreaded their mother's only joke. Mrs. Mulvaney was never more to be feared than at such times. She was cross enough, anyway; but when she said, "Come, clear out,

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"I'm going to play a tune on my piano!" they scattered.

"Rub, rub, rub! Rub, rub, rub!" Mrs. Mulvaney kept perfect time. "Rub, rub, rub, rub, rub—splash!" the tune was ever the same. Hour after hour there was no other sound in the kitchen unless an unlucky little Mulvaney interrupted the music.

It made no difference what the children said, nor how they said it, Mrs. Mulvaney was sure to be angry and the children were sure to cry. They were always dodging and trying to keep out of their mother's reach. They learned to dodge when there was a Mr. Mulvaney. While he lived there was reason. He drank a great deal from a bottle.

One day the oldest child, Hannah, who knew her letters, said, as she gazed at the bottle sticking out of his pocket, "Pa, what does 'W-H-I-S-K-E-Y' spell?"

Instead of striking the little girl as usual, Mr. Patrick Mulvaney grinned as he replied: "'Baxter's Saint's Rest,' Hannah, my dear; it's a sure cure for rheumatiz."

The next day Mr. Mulvaney died, and some one told Hannah that the stuff in the bottle



"THE TUNE WAS EVER THE SAME"



killed him; that it was poison. Hannah wished to ask her mother some questions about it, but didn't dare. In fact, the little Mulvaney knew better than to ask questions.

Perhaps Mrs. Mulvaney would have been more agreeable if there had been fewer children to care for; but seven half-clothed, half-starved youngsters, ever quarrelling about something, made her cross.

How could the little Mulvaney dream their mother was out of sorts with all creation, just because she couldn't take better care of her family? How could Stubbins guess that his mother shook him until his teeth rattled just because it made her heart ache to see the wistful look on his face when the bread and molasses was gone, and he said he was hungry?

Stubbins was the baby. He may have had another name, but he was called Stubbins because he was always stubbing his toes. Not that the child was to blame. In all his life the little fellow had never worn a pair of shoes that fitted him. What baby would have done any better in shoes many sizes too big and full of holes at that? Neither were the Mulvaney to blame. When old shoes were given to

them, the smallest size was always saved for Stubbins.

Mike was older. He was a round-faced youngster, who got into more mischief than all the others put together.

Johnnie came next; and because Johnnie was sad-looking, and had great blue eyes that seemed ever asking for something, he got all the spankings. It is hard to tell how it happened, but when Johnnie stuck both fists in his eyes and said he wasn't to blame, he hadn't done a thing, he was sure to get a spanking. Poor Johnnie.

Dora and Nora were the twins, and that is about all they were. They not only looked alike, but acted alike. They both had short, black hair, and they both chewed their aprons, their dresses, or their petticoats, whichever happened to be the topmost garment.

Chinkey was red-headed and freckled. No one ever asked Mrs. Mulvaney what the boy's true name was, and it may be that he didn't have any.

Hannah was a thin little girl, with pale blue eyes. Mrs. Mulvaney seemed to enjoy boxing her ears.



On their own street, these little folks were known as the Mulvaney young ones; it was never Johnnie, nor Mike, nor Hannah: even Stubbins was known as "That smallest Mulvaney young one."

The children said they lived in the third house from the corner, though it was a wonder they thought of calling their home a house. It was a tumbled-down affair, with two rooms below and a place above where the children slept.

Steam and soapsuds shared the kitchen with Mrs. Mulvaney. In a corner, as if trying to escape notice, was a rickety table, around which the family gathered at meal-time. There was a hungry wood-box in one corner, close beside a hungrier stove. No chairs troubled Mrs. Mulvaney in that kitchen. A bench and some boxes were used in their place. When wood was scarce Mrs. Mulvaney was sometimes obliged to burn the boxes. If only one box was lacking, Johnnie — always Johnnie — had to stand at the table.

Opening from the kitchen was an apartment known as the Other Room. Callers were taken there. It was an interesting place.

Everything the Mulvaney's owned that wasn't in the kitchen, lodged somewhere in that room! There were three chairs in it, mostly used to put things under. The family comb and brush was always to be found there if one hunted long enough. The mixing-board and Mrs. Mulvaney's bonnet frequently tumbled against each other on the bureau, while the dish-pan was oftener in the Other Room than in the kitchen.

In the midst of all this the seven little Mulvaney's played, quarrelled, and somehow grew.

## CHAPTER II.

### THROUGH THE KITCHEN WINDOW

It had never been Mrs. Mulvaney's way to notice who her neighbours were, nor what they were doing. When they tried to be friendly she had given them to understand that if they would mind their business she would mind hers. Gossiping over the fence was never one of her amusements. She was too busy.

Not that Mrs. Mulvaney cared what the children did. If they kept out of the kitchen that was all she asked of them. They might hang over the fence from morning until night if they chose, and hanging over the fence was exactly what they did choose when they could do so without freezing.

It was Mrs. Mulvaney's custom to turn the children into the street long before the calendar

said spring, and from Hannah to Stubbins the flock was glad to tumble from the Other Room into freedom.

"Ma!" shouted Hannah, one April morn-



ing, when Stubbins was sitting in a mud puddle having a good time, while Mike and Chinkey waded through the gutter, "Oh, ma! there's folks coming to live in the next house!"

"Don't stop 'em," suggested Mrs. Mulvaney.

"But, ma!" continued Hannah, "you can't guess what the lady's doing. You'd never guess. She—she's washing the window!"

"She might better be playing her piano," retorted Mrs. Mulvaney. "Now you clear out, Hannah, or you'll get stepped on. Start your boots."

Hannah was barefooted, but she started without making any further remarks.

Half an hour later, when Mrs. Mulvaney glanced through the window to see if her clothes were getting dry, she noticed her seven watching their new neighbours.

Chinkey and Hannah were perched on the top rail of the fence, with their arms folded. The twins were clinging to the same rail, while Johnnie, Mike, and Stubbins were gazing through openings below.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Mulvaney.

Just as she was ready to go back to her tub a merry voice called out, "Oh, I see your mother! Good morning, Mrs. Mulvaney, we've come to live here!"

"Well, I never!" repeated Mrs. Mulvaney; but instead of returning to her work, she looked for the owner of the voice.

"Here I am, over here in our window!" and a joyous laugh floated above the tin cans and rubbish, finding its way into Mrs. Mulvaney's kitchen.

"Well, I never!" again declared Mrs. Mulvaney, staring at a little girl who waved her hand in greeting.

"Come down off that fence, you good-for-nothing young ones!" she called to her children. "Don't you know your manners? If I have to leave my piano and come out there with a tunin'-fork, you'll be sorry!"

Down dropped the seven so quickly the little girl over the way laughed again. How many times Mrs. Mulvaney looked through her window that morning would be hard to say. Once when Johnnie caught her doing so, she ran out and spanked him.

"Boo-hoo," wailed Johnnie, "if Mike said it was — boo-hoo — me — that — that made Stubbins eat a handful of m-mud, he — he told a lie. He did it his own self!"

"Where's Mike?" demanded Mrs. Mulvaney.

"Right here!" announced the young scamp; "do you want me, ma?"

"Did you make Stubbins eat mud?"

"Nope, did I, Stubbins?"

"Yeth — oh, no, ma, no! Oh, thay, ma, I — I like mud."

"Now, Stubbins," put in Mike, "you know you'd eat a houseful of mud if I didn't make you stop. Now remember, you tell ma."

"Yeth, yeth, I 'member. Thay, ma, I like mud," insisted Stubbins. "Oh, thay! I — I like it tho well I'd — I'd eat a houth full of it and thay it wath good!"

Johnnie was taken into the kitchen and given another spanking. The little neighbour, who heard what happened, was indignant.

"Why, you Mike, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," she said. "If my mother'd let me, I'd go and tell your mother what I know. Now, Stubbins, what made you say you liked mud?"

"Becauth, becauth Mike thay to me if I don't thay I like mud, he'll take me down and thuff me with it! Ith tho nathty — ith no good. Thubbins don't like mud!"

"Mike, you're the one that ought to get the spanking, so you had," sputtered the little neighbour.

"Don't tell him that," besought Chinkey, with a grin, "or he'll faint away! He ain't used to it."

"Duck, kids," warned Hannah, "ma's lookin'."

Mrs. Mulvaney couldn't have explained why she took so great an interest in her new neigh-



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bours, but from the day they moved in, she watched them through the window. One morning when it was too cold to have the window open, she washed it so she could see the little girl of the sunny face. When Hannah acted surprised and ventured a question, her mother boxed her ears.

## CHAPTER III.

### NEW NEIGHBOURS

SEVERAL days passed before the Mulvaneys knew the name of the little girl next door. When she was not in school her mother kept her busy doing errands. At last, on Saturday, Hannah climbed upon the fence and motioned for her new neighbour to come out.

"What for?" asked the child.

"Oh, 'cause, just for fun. Come on out and set on the fence. Be careful, though, or the boards'll break. They're rotten the other side of that post."

"All right, I'm coming. Kind of a teetery fence, isn't it? Oh, dear, it's dirty!"

Hannah laughed. "Of course! everything's dirty; that's nothing. What's your name?"

"My name's Sally Brown. I thought you knew it. I don't want to sit on the fence, it's

too slippery. I'll stand here on this little board. It's too dirty for anything around that fence."

"You better not let Chinkey know you're afraid of dirt. If he catches you standing like that with your dress held back so tight, he'd push you in the mud, sure."

"Then Alfred would fix him," Sally replied, lifting her skirts more carefully, and raising her head a trifle higher.

"Who's Alfred?"

"He's my brother."

"Is he afraid of dirt, too?"

"He hates it, of course."

"If you're so stuck up, I'd like to know what you came here to live for! Your house ain't half's good as ours. It ain't got a kitchen."

Sally's face clouded. "We didn't come because we wanted to, Hannah; we had to move here. It's a horrid place to live in. Did your folks come here 'cause they had to?"

Hannah shook her head. "I never thought about it. We've lived here always, and ma has to pay the rent."

"Lived here always!" exclaimed Sally.

"Lived here always! When are you going to move, Hannah?"

"Never, Sally; ma says if we go anywhere, it'll be to the poorhouse. I guess that's kind of a prison, 'cause she says she's bound to keep us out of it."

Sally moved a step nearer. "Isn't your father dead?" she asked.

"Sure!" agreed Hannah.

"Then before he died, didn't you live somewhere else?"

"Why, no. Is your pa dead?"

"Yes, Hannah, or else mamma and Alfred and I wouldn't be here."

"Why not?"

"Because, of course we wouldn't. We lived in a beautiful place, Hannah, when I was a little bit of a girl."

"Where was it at?"

"It was in a country town where all the folks had big, green yards and trees. There were flowers and birds everywhere. We are going back in the country to live, mamma and Alfred and I, just as soon as we get money enough. That is why mamma sews all the time. Only, the trouble is, we can't save any

money even with what Alfred earns; it's queer."

"Money's awful hard to get," admitted Hannah. "I know that much. Does Alfred earn money, Sally?"

"Oh, yes, a little, he sells newspapers."

"Then I should think Chinkey might."

"So should I, Hannah, he's almost as big's Alfred. Maybe he's lazy."

"Well, Smarty, he ain't lazy. You better not say that. He takes home the washing, and picks up driftwood along the river for ma! You call him lazy again and I'll push you in the mud!"

"Oh, I only said 'was he?' I didn't mean anything. I guess I'll go in, now. Good-bye, Hannah."

"Oh, don't go; stay here, Sally, and tell me more about your green house."

Sally laughed. "The house wasn't green, Hannah, but the growing things were green. Instead of all this horrid dirt and mud the folks had grass. Everything was clean and beautiful. Oh, it wasn't a bit like this."

"Then why didn't you stay there, Sally?"

"Oh, Hannah, I wish we had. Perhaps

then our father wouldn't have died. He sold our home because he wanted to live in the city. He said he could get more money in the city. At first we lived in a nice, big house, and we all liked it pretty well until an accident happened to our father. He was in the hospital for a long time. Maybe the hospital's the same's the poorhouse, Hannah, because our father said he never was so glad to get out of a place in his life. He thought he would get well at home, but he didn't, and we had to move before he was any better, and then we had to move again. We used up all our money buying medicine and things, and then we had to sell our furniture. That was a good thing, though, because we didn't have much to move after awhile, and we had to keep moving.

"Every house we lived in was worse than the one we lived in before. At last our father died. He couldn't help it. This is the very worst house we ever had to live in, Hannah, but our mother says we've got to keep our courage up. We haven't much of anything left of all we owned in the country except ourselves, just our mother and Alfred and me."

"When you move back in the country," said

Hannah, who dreamed for the first time of something better than mud and alleys, "when you move back in the country, I want to go, too."

"Would your mother let you go?"

"She says she'd give me to the swill-man if he'd take me."

"Oh, Hannah!" cried Sally. "Oh, you poor Hannah! Must be your mother was joking!"

"Hannah, Hannah Mulvaney! Come in here this minute, or I'll box your ears!" called Mrs. Mulvaney. "You come along and tend these young ones! Do you hear?"

Two little girls disappeared instantly.

"Oh, mamma Brown!" cried Sally. "Never mind what kind of a house we live in, we're rich, you and I and Alfred."



## CHAPTER IV.

### CHINKEY MULVANEY'S PARIS - SHOOT

"THAT Brown kid thinks he's awful smart!" Chinkey Mulvaney turned a back somersault by way of finishing the remark, and came near landing on a pig in the alley.

"Hear him thqueal!" cried Stubbins, jumping up and down in the mud. "Thee him go! Thee him go!"

"Pigs can learn to keep out of my way," declared Chinkey; "they needn't think they own the alley!"

"What maketh little pigth like to roll in the mud?" continued Stubbins.

"Same thing that makes that Brown kid think he's so smart!" Chinkey retorted.

"Whath that?"

"'Cause they don't know any better."

"Now, Chink," interrupted Hannah, "I think Alfred Brown's a real nice boy."

"Oh, you do, do you?"

"Yes, I do."

"He's her feller," suggested Mike.

"He is not, I ain't got a feller," Hannah replied; "and if I had red hair and freckles like Chinkey, I'd keep still, so I would."

"Say that again and you'll get slapped," warned Chinkey.

"I don't chew my cabbage twice," sniffed Hannah, "but I'd say it again if I wanted to."

"Thay it, then," cried Stubbins.

"Don't have to," Hannah replied.

"'Fraid cat, 'fraid cat!" taunted Mike.

"Maybe I ain't got red hair and freckles," suggested Chinkey, with a grin, "but anyhow, that Brown kid thinks he's too smart."

"Why?" asked Hannah.

"He brags too much."

"What about?"

"Things he's seen. Guess he don't know who he's talking to when he talks to me. I guess I went to a circus once, didn't I, Johnnie?"

"Guess you did, Chink; you carried water for the elephants and got a ticket for pay, but I —"

"You got a lickin' when you got home, didn't you?" finished Mike.

"Shut up, will you?" roared Johnnie. "If you hadn't gone and told ma I tried to sneak in, she never'd known it! Tattletale! If you hadn't been along I could 'a' squeezed in easy enough. I'd give anything to go to a circus. S'pose Alfred's been to a hundred."

"He's been to circuses and shows and everything," agreed Hannah. "He went to a balloon once; he told us about it."

"A real one?" asked Johnnie.

"Yes, sir, and he saw a man come down in a Paris-shoot."

"What's that?" persisted Johnnie.

"It's a — it's a — I don't know's I can tell. You tell about it, Chinkey. You told Alfred you'd seen a thousand pictures of 'em."

"Well, Han, I did see one picture on a fence down by the fair grounds."

"You said you saw a thousand."

Chinkey's mouth stretched from ear to ear as he replied:

"Guess I can brag's well's other folks. Braggin's cheap."

"But I want to know what is a Paris-shoot?" demanded Johnnie.

"Well, you go up in a balloon, you know," began Chinkey, "you know a balloon's a thing that goes up in the air and you don't know where it's going to come down. They call it a balloon senshun. I knew all about it 'fore I saw Smarty Brown."

"It's the same thing as a kite," explained Hannah, "only you can't go up in a kite, ain't it, Chinkey?"

"Yes, I s'pose. Well, in the balloon senshun, Johnnie, they carry a Paris-shoot, all shut up like a numbrell. Then, when all the folks are looking, a man climbs to the edge of the balloon senshun, opens up his Paris-shoot and down he comes like a bird."

"Oh, I want to see one!" said Johnnie.

"'Tain't much of a sight, I can tell you that," answered Chinkey. "It's just like a numbrell."

"Ma's got a numbrell," Mike whispered.

"Yes, touch it if you dare," cautioned Johnnie.

"I dare," insisted Chinkey.

"Yes, but dare you play it's a Paris-shoot, and come down in it?" asked Mike.

"Sure, Cutey, only where's your balloon senshun to go up in? How can I come down if I don't go up?"

"Oh, I'll tell you," squealed Hannah, "let's play balloon senshun out of the window, 'less you're 'fraid ma's umbrell won't work!"

"'Fraid," sniffed Chinkey, "who's afraid? But how can we play balloon senshun out of the window?"

"Oh, I'll fix that. Who wants to play go to a Paris-shoot show? Stubbins, where are you? Come, Stubbins!"

"I wath throwin' thoneth at pigth to make 'em thqueal."

"Well, come on, we are going to play a new game. Do you want to come with us?"

"Yeth, wait, I ith comin'."

"Now we will have some fun. Mike, you and Johnnie take hold of Stubbins' hands and go find the twins. Then you all sit on the fence and watch while Chink and me sneak the umbrell up-stairs. Then Chinkey can climb out of the window and I'll open the umbrell out of the

window, and then he can let go and catch hold of the umbrell by the handle — and down he'll come like a Paris-shoot man at a balloon sen-shun."

"He'll come down like a bird!" added Johnnie.

"Do you s'pose it's safe, though?" questioned Hannah.

"Why, of course, silly," Chinkey declared. "Don't you see, the Paris-shoot catches the wind and you come down easy. It's just like sailing down-hill! When I get to the ground you must all clap your hands. But mind you keep still now, so ma don't catch on and spoil it all."

"Say, Chink," inquired Johnnie, "what makes 'em call it a Paris-shoot?"

"'Cause the first one was made in the country of Paris, of course, and not in America where we live."

When Chinkey and Hannah appeared at the tiny window, they were not only greeted by the faces of the little Mulvaneys, but Sally and Alfred were also upon the fence, eager to see the fun. Chinkey climbed out, waved one arm, and grinned. The green umbrella was

opened with much difficulty. It was old and clumsy.

"'Fraid, Chinkey?" whispered Hannah. "If you are, I'll say the Paris-shoot won't work."

"Naw! I'll show that Brown kid a game he never played."

"Now, then," gasped Hannah, "all ready, catch a hold. Mercy! I'm scared!"

Down went Chinkey and the old umbrella, and up rose scream upon scream from the fence. Hannah leaned from the window and almost tumbled out herself when she saw Chinkey lying motionless where he had fallen. The umbrella was smashed, and Hannah was sure that Chinkey was dead.



## CHAPTER V.

### MRS. MULVANEY'S PROMISE

JOHNNIE was in the kitchen before Hannah could get down-stairs. He was wailing dismally, and beseeching his mother to look out in the yard.

"What have you smashed now?" demanded Mrs. Mulvaney.

"Oh, dear, I didn't do it, it ain't my fault, ma! Don't, ma, quit that! I didn't do a thing."

"I'll get a shingle in a minute if you don't stop your howling. Out with it, now, what's broken?"

"Your — your green umbrell. Oh, ow, ow! I didn't do it, ma, it ain't my fault!"

At that moment Hannah reached the kitchen.

"Oh, ma!" she screamed, seizing her mother's sleeve and surprising the woman so



she released Johnnie. "Oh, ma, Chinkey's killed! Oh, what shall we do?"

"Have his funeral," sobbed Johnnie; whereupon his mother gave him another whack.

A moment later Mrs. Mulvaney held Chinkey in her arms for the first time since he was an infant.

"Mike, you run for the doctor!" she commanded. "Hannah, you rid up the other room quicker'n scat."

Even Mrs. Mulvaney didn't know where to put Chinkey when she carried him into the Other Room. She was standing in the middle of the floor looking helplessly about when Mrs. Brown appeared.

"You hold him just a minute more," said Mrs. Brown, taking the room in at a glance, "and I'll clear off the bed. Here's a bottle of camphor I brought over."

"Help her, Hannah, you idiot, move!" commanded Mrs. Mulvaney; but poor Hannah was motionless as the children outside who were looking through the window.

Mrs. Brown worked quickly. She removed a basket of potatoes from the bed, the boiler cover, an old shawl, the stove poker, a loaf of

dry bread, and a few garments belonging to Mrs. Mulvaney.

“Where are the sheets?” she asked.

“At the store!” was Mrs. Mulvaney’s reply.

Satisfied with the hint, Mrs. Brown did the best she could with an old blanket and some quilts she found on the floor.

In the meantime Mrs. Mulvaney had made use of the camphor. The only good it did was to wash the dirt from Chinkey’s face and show how white it was.

“It’s a hard world, and he’s well out of it,” said Mrs. Mulvaney, as she placed the child upon the bed, “but,” and there was a catch in her voice, “he was a good boy; I don’t know how I can get along without him.”

Mrs. Brown was crying. In spite of the freckles and the disordered red hair, poor Chinkey looked childlike and innocent. Mrs. Brown had overheard him saying bad words not an hour before, and had determined to keep her children away from the boy.

“The doctor’s here, ma,” announced Hannah, “the same doctor that told us pa was dead for sure.”

Hannah wondered how her mother could

keep the tears back. She sobbed aloud and her head felt bursting. Mrs. Mulvaney glanced toward the child, and then said, almost gently, "Run out, Hannah — you take up too much room."

Fortunately, the doctor was slight, and had been in the Other Room before. A few minutes after his arrival Mrs. Brown told the little Mulvaney that Chinkey was alive and that he had broken no bones.

"We'll have to take the little fellow to the hospital," remarked the doctor.

"I'll watch out for my own children," opposed Mrs. Mulvaney. She was twice as large as the doctor, and appeared to mean what she said.

"But the boy's head is injured, I tell you, Mrs. Mulvaney, and I fear brain fever."

"I won't have him took to the hospital," persisted Mrs. Mulvaney.

"The boy will die here." The man turned to Mrs. Brown. "You see, madam, he needs perfect quiet — and —"

"And sheets," Mrs. Brown added in her mind. "Yes, yes, I understand," she said, aloud. "Well, doctor, I am Mrs. Mulvaney's

nearest neighbour, and the boy may be taken to my house if Mrs. Mulvaney is willing. I know how she feels about it; she wants the child where she can look after him herself. You see, I have only two children, and I can easily keep them quiet."

After much persuasion Mrs. Mulvaney consented to this plan, and Mrs. Brown went home to make a bed for Chinkey. In a few moments she sent her little girl to say it was ready.

Chinkey had no night-dress. Mrs. Mulvaney said her children always slept in their clothes. When Chinkey was undressed, bathed, and put in a night-dress belonging to Alfred, he looked better, although he kept his eyes closed and moaned constantly.

"It's the first time he was ever put between sheets in his life," said Mrs. Mulvaney, bending over the couch and smoothing back her son's unruly hair.

"He'll get along finely, now," the doctor promised, "he's bound to come out all right." Then for the first time Mrs. Mulvaney brushed away tears with the back of her hand.

"He was a good boy," she said, in a choked

voice. "If I can ever keep your children out of the hospital or the poorhouse either, Mrs. Brown, I'll do it."

Mrs. Mulvaney stayed with Chinkey all night. She didn't dare sleep lest she might forget to give the boy his medicine: nor could she have slept while he moaned so pitifully.

Many a day Mrs. Mulvaney had said she never had time to think. That night there was nothing left for her to do through the long hours but think and think. She never told the thoughts that came to her in that clean and quiet room, but when Chinkey opened his eyes at dawn his mother was bending over him with an expression on her face he had never seen before.

"Ma," he whispered, "I'm glad you're here."

Mrs. Mulvaney kissed the child.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CHINKEY'S AWAKENING

CHINKEY believed he dreamed that his mother kissed him. She was gone the next time he opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he asked, fretfully. "What ails me, anyhow?"

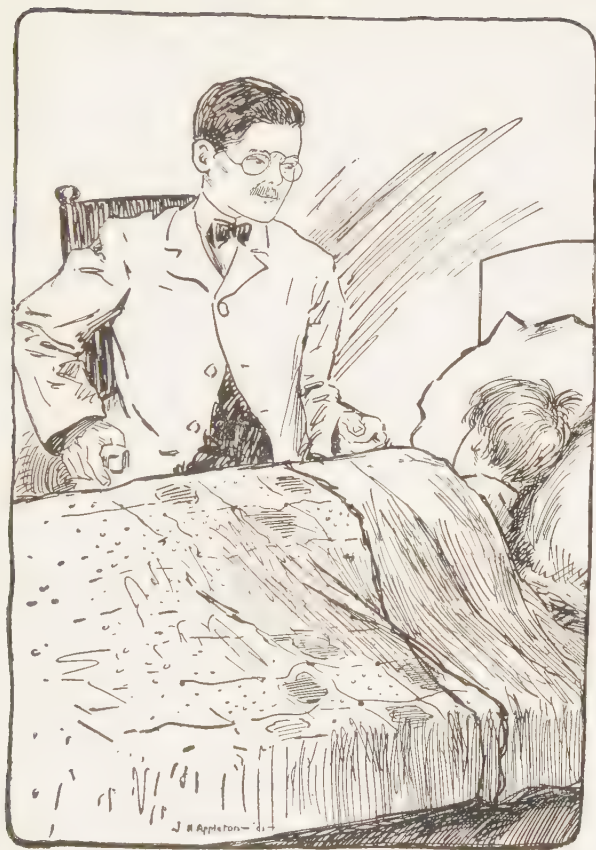
"Oh, don't try to get up, lie still, Chinkey."

The boy stared at Sally, but he was glad to let his head drop back.

"You must be quiet, little boy," cautioned Sally's mother, "or you may be very ill. You had a bad fall, and Sally and I brought you home with us. We are going to keep you until you are well."

"I ain't sick," protested the boy, "and I didn't fall."

"All right, close your eyes, dear," agreed Mrs. Brown.



“THERE, THERE, LITTLE MAN, YOU’LL BE BETTER  
SOON”





Chinkey closed his eyes. Surely he was having more strange dreams. In his mind he repeated that word "dear" over and over. Mrs. Brown had called him "Dear." Poor Chinkey didn't realize much that day. He asked no further questions. When the doctor came he stared at him and said aloud, "Dear, dear, dear."

"He's in pain, you see," the doctor remarked to Mrs. Mulvaney.

"Dear, dear, dear," moaned Chinkey.

"There, there, little man, you'll be better soon," continued the doctor.

"Dear — little — man," Chinkey said the words slowly, then closed his eyes and gave up. There was no use trying to straighten the tangles.

Two days later Sally was startled when she found Chinkey watching her. The puzzled look was gone from his eyes.

"Where's your ma?" he asked.

"Right here, dear," replied Mrs. Brown.

"What makes you say dear?" questioned Chinkey.

"Because you are my little neighbour, and

because all little boys are dear. Don't you know that?"

"No. Is Mike dear, and Johnnie, and Stubbins?"

"Yes, little boy, certainly."

An old-time grin overspread Chinkey's pale face. "I wish you'd tell ma, then," he suggested, "she don't know it."

"Your mother knows more than you think she does," replied Mrs. Brown. "Sally, go and tell Chinkey's mother that he is better. She'll be so glad."

"What ails me?" asked Chinkey.

"You fell out of the window with an umbrella and were hurt."

"Did I break the umbrella?"

"Guess you did," answered Sally, "smashed it all to pieces."

"Then I'll catch it."

"No you won't," added Sally; "you see, you were almost killed, Chinkey, and you've been dreadfully sick. You pretty near broke your neck."

"Why, I've jumped farther than that and never got hurt; that ain't a high window."

"Well, but Chinkey, you doubled up and

got all mixed up with the umbrella, and your head struck a stone."

"There, Sally," interrupted her mother, "the little boy is getting tired. Run over to Mrs. Mulvaney's and tell her Chinkey will soon be walking home. She'll wish to see him now that he acts like himself once more."

Sally returned without Mrs. Mulvaney.

"Ma comin'?" asked Chinkey.

Sally shook her head. "I guess she's too busy just now."

"What'd she say?" insisted Chinkey.

"About what?"

"'Bout me comin' home?"

Sally flushed. "Never mind, Chinkey. You can't go home for a long time, anyway. We won't let you."

"What'd ma say?"

"Never mind what she said."

"Tell me."

"Well, if you must know, she said, 'A bad penny is sure to return.'"

The boy turned his face to the wall. It was, of course, all a dream. Surely his mother never kissed him. He looked at his hands, scrubbed so white he scarcely knew them.

Perhaps Mrs. Brown did that. The Browns didn't like dirt. Mothers were so different. Sally's mother had called him "Dear."

"Mrs. Brown," said Chinkey, suddenly, "I'm always going to wash my hands."

"You dear child, of course you are; I'm sure of it."

"If you'd been killed, Chinkey Mulvaney, you'd been up in heaven long ago," declared Sally. "I most wish you had."

"Well, I don't," Chinkey hastened to say.

"Then it's because you don't know what heaven's like. It's a beautiful place, Chinkey, it's like the country, I guess. Were you ever in the country?"

"No, never."

"Well, it's lovely in the country; there are green fields everywhere, and nice roads and robins, and yellowbirds, and violets and buttercups, and you can keep a cow and have all the milk you want, and you can pick all kinds of berries, and have them for supper. Oh, it's lovely in the country. We are going back there pretty soon, maybe. Oh, Chinkey! it's fun to wade through brooks."

"What's brooks, Sally?"

"Little streams of clear, clear water. And the woods, Chinkey! You can't guess what the woods are like. Oh, I wish Santa Claus would give us a bag full of money when he comes next Christmas, so we can surely go in the spring."

"Santa Claus never comes here, Sally; he's no good."

"You just wait, Chinkey Mulvaney, and see. Maybe you can go to the country, too. Would you be glad?"

"If Hannah and the rest could go. Sally, tell me more about the country, won't you?"

"Not now," objected Mrs. Brown. "I fear you will get too tired. Close your eyes, little boy, and keep quiet — that's a good child."

Chinkey was quiet, but he couldn't keep his eyes closed. Everything in the room was clean and in order. There was no dirt nor confusion. Even the stove was shining. Chinkey had never seen so cheery and homelike a place as that one room.

"Where do you sleep, Mrs. Brown?" he asked.

"There is a tiny bedroom besides this room,

Chinkey dear. Sally plays this is a palace. Rather a small one, isn't it?"

"It's nicer'n anything I ever saw before," Chinkey replied.

"What makes you look so sad, then?" asked Sally, who was taking out basting threads for her mother. "What are you thinking of?"

"Nothin'."

How could Chinkey explain that he wished his mother was pretty like Mrs. Brown; that he wished she combed her hair in puffs and waves instead of twisting it in a hard knot at the back of her head? No, Chinkey couldn't tell Sally all he thought while he watched her mother sew.

At last he closed his eyes and dreamed that his own mother was smiling and saying something in a gentle voice.

"Yes, yes," he muttered, "I'll keep my hands clean, ma, I can do that much."

"Poor little fellow," said Mrs. Brown, "I let him get too tired. He's talking in his sleep."

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## CHAPTER VII.

### SOAP AND WATER

CHINKEY was soon well. "Ma thay he ith tough," Stubbins reported to Sally.

"Stubbins," questioned Sally, "does anybody ever wash your face and hands?"

"You thut up," was the response, and Stubbins threw a handful of mud at Sally.

Johnnie ran in the house and told his mother.

"Did he hit her?" asked Mrs. Mulvaney.

"No, he couldn't. Sally laughed, and ran away."

"She's always laughing," put in Mike.

"And it won't be long before she'll run away for good," added Chinkey. "She's going out in the country to live."

"Stubbins sha'n't throw mud at any one," observed Mrs. Mulvaney, "and the next time you come in and tell me he's been throwing

mud, Johnnie, I'll spank you for not stopping it. I've a good mind to this time. Now you all clear out."

"Oh, dear, I wish ma was like Mrs. Brown," said Hannah, who was the first to leave the kitchen.

"Watch out," warned Johnnie. "Window's up, and she'll hear you."

"No danger," sighed Hannah, "she makes too much noise herself. Ma always looks as if she could bite your head off."

"I wish you was like Sally," suggested Dora.

"I do, too," added Nora.

"Well, I can't be," replied Hannah. "If I had a decent dress, and hair-ribbons and things, and if ma smiled once in awhile, — but she don't, so what's the use? You're horrid-looking little girls, too. You look just awful."

"Can't you wash 'em up?" suggested Chinkey. "Mrs. Brown says soap and water does lots of good sometimes."

At the mere mention of soap and water the twins crawled under the fence and flew down the alley.



"Don't you s'pose, Hannah, that we could make the Other Room look better?"

"No, I don't," snapped Hannah.

"We could try."

"No good, Chink; who cares, anyway?"

Mrs. Mulvaney cared. She overheard every word the children said. At first she was angry; then a queer look crept over her face.

"I'll do it," she said aloud. "I'll let my work go and clean those youngsters up. Hannah," she called, sharply, as she stepped to the door, "tell Stubbins to come here, then go for the twins. I want you all to come in."

Stubbins began to cry. "I didn't do anything, ma," he wailed. "Oh, thay, ma, let me go and play with the pigth — I'll be good, I'll be good."

The child screamed in terror when his mother lifted him up on the table and undressed him. He wore so little it was the work of a minute.

"Now, Stubbins," she said, "I'm going to give you a wash-up, so stop your squealing and your kicking. Do you hear?"

"Oh, ma, pleathe don't. Oh, ma, ma!"

The flock appeared as Mrs. Mulvaney

plunged Stubbins in a tub of soapsuds. Then Stubbins howled and screeched. "Oh, ma, ith too hot! Oh, thoap — thoap — thoap in my eyeth!"

"Keep your fists out of your eyes, then. No, you can't get away from me, young un. Hannah, fetch me the scrubbin'-brush."

"Oh, thay, ma, don't, pleathe don't!" screamed Stubbins, as his mother began scrubbing his head. Such a splashing and screaming was never before heard in that kitchen. By the time Stubbins was clean he was hoarse.

"Now, Hannah," said Mrs. Mulvaney, as she lifted the dripping, struggling child from the tub and placed him upon the table, "now, you take my striped petticoat and wipe him dry, then dress him. Now, Mike, step up, it's your turn."

"Oh, ow, I don't want to get no wash-up," Mike protested. "I ain't never had one before, and what have I done to get one now?"

"I thought you'd be laughin' out of the other side of your mouth when you was took," remarked Mrs. Mulvaney, "and I'll teach you not to be tellin' that you never had a wash-up."

You're going to have 'em regular, now, the first day of every month."

Johnnie, the twins, Hannah, and Chinkey, were put into the same tub and scrubbed until they begged for mercy. The neighbours heard their screams and shuddered. They feared Mrs. Mulvaney was half-killing the children.

"Good land!" exclaimed the woman, as she sat down in the Other Room to survey her flock. "You do make an uncommon fuss about gettin' washed. When I was a little girl, I had my scrub every Saturday night."

"Oh, dear," groaned Mike, "glad I wasn't you."

"And in the summer-time," Mrs. Mulvaney went on, "when I went barefoot all the time, I washed my feet in the brook every night!"

"You lived in the country, then!" cried Chinkey. "Why didn't you ever tell us you lived in the country?"

"I ain't had time, Chinkey, — I'd almost forgot it myself."

"Would you like to live in the country again?" asked Hannah.

Mrs. Mulvaney sighed. "I dunno's I ever thought of it."

"Well, I have," Hannah continued. "I don't think of anything else, because Sally talks about it all the time. They're going back there to live. Mrs. Brown's going to be a dressmaker, and they're going to have a garden and a cow and things. I wish we could go, too."

"I never thought of it," repeated Mrs. Mulvaney. "Where's Stubbins?"

"He skipped out a minute ago," Chinkey replied. "Oh, here he comes, carrying a little pig. He's been trying to catch one for a week. He crawls into the pen when the old pig's gone. Oh, look at him!"

"Keep still!" warned Hannah, "let's see what he'll do."

There was a sound of squealing in the kitchen, then a splash.

"Thomebody come," called Stubbins, "the bad pig hath got away! He ith tryin' to get out! Hith tail ith thlippery — oh, come, thomebody, quick!"

Mrs. Mulvaney actually laughed when she saw the little pig trying to get out of the tub and keep away from Stubbins at the same time.

“Why, Stubbins, are you trying to drown the pig?”

“I ith tryin’ to get him clean, ma. He ith



a dirty pig. Mith Brown thay in the country the little pigth are clean. Thith ith a bad pig, hear him thqueal!”

Mrs. Mulvaney carried the pig back to the pen.

“What’s happened to ma, anyway?” asked Johnnie, “she ain’t scolded a word nor spanked one of us for an hour.”

“Don’t brag,” remarked Hannah.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HOW MRS. MULVANEY KEPT HER PROMISE

AUTUMN found the Mulvaney family in good health; it was the only point in their favour. July and August left Mrs. Mulvaney without a fragment of patience, and the children with tempers all but ruined.

The monthly bath which Mrs. Mulvaney persisted in giving them was dreaded by the neighbourhood. There was much rejoicing when Hannah announced that after October the children wouldn't have to be washed again until spring; their mother didn't wish them to have colds and possibly pneumonia.

Sally Brown was the only one in that wretched part of the world who kept her faith. Through the breathless, sultry months, she laughed and sang.

"Next summer we'll be in the country," she

said, again and again. "We'll have a garden all our own. We'll have flowers, and the robins'll build nests in our trees, and Alfred and I and mamma will have such good times."

To be sure, the Mulvaney family troubled Sally. She wondered why Mrs. Mulvaney was always cross. "Now, if I had a little boy," argued Sally, "and he was almost killed and then pretty near died afterward, I'd be good to him, but she isn't; she's worse to Chinkey than she is to the rest. I can't understand such folks."

"Well, I don't care where we go next," grumbled Alfred, one cheerless day in autumn, as he left home to sell his newspapers, "I say, I don't care where we go if we only get where we don't hear the voice of old Mother Mulvaney."

Sally was too surprised to say a word. "Old Mother Mulvaney!" she rather liked the way it sounded. Mrs. Brown didn't look up, but kept on making buttonholes. Sally cleared her throat, but her mother paid no attention. The little girl watched closely, and finally saw





"MRS. BROWN . . . KEPT ON MAKING BUTTONHOLES"



tears falling upon the work in her mother's lap.

"Why, mamma," she said, "what is the matter? Is it because Alfred was cross? He won't do it again. What is the matter, mamma?"

Sally put her arms around her mother's neck, and the work fell to the floor.

"Why, how hot your hands are, mamma, and your cheeks, too. Are you sick, mamma?"

"Mother isn't very well," replied Mrs. Brown, resting her head on the willing little shoulder, "and Sally, mother's discouraged."

"Now, never mind, mamma; if you're sick, I'll take care of you."

"Poor little girl, I don't know what will become of you if anything happens to mother."

"Won't anything happen to you, Mamma Brown; you've always been well, haven't you?"

"Yes, Sally, but there's no use hiding the truth. Mother hasn't felt well for a long, long time, and I'm afraid she can't work any more for awhile."

The next day Mrs. Brown was unable to lift her head. Sally went to Mrs. Mulvaney and

begged her to come over. Without a word, Mrs. Mulvaney left her washing and followed Sally.

"Oh, Mrs. Mulvaney, what shall I do?" asked Mrs. Brown, her face the picture of despair.

"Keep still, and don't worry," Mrs. Mulvaney advised.

"But the children," sobbed Mrs. Brown, "what will become of Alfred and Sally?"

"Now don't fret," Mrs. Mulvaney continued, "I'll look after the young ones until you are on your feet again."

Sally shrank into a corner; Alfred shook his fists behind Mrs. Mulvaney's back.

"But we've only money enough left to pay the rent that's due to-morrow," Mrs. Brown went on, "and what shall we do?"

"Don't fret," repeated Mrs. Mulvaney. "Where's your boy? Oh, here you be! You go tell my Johnnie to fetch the doctor; he knows where to find him. Don't let the grass grow under your feet.

"Now you look a-here, Mrs. Brown, crying'll only make you worse. Maybe you ain't as sick's you think you be, but if you have to

go to the hospital, your young ones are comin' over to stay with me, bag and baggage, until you get out. Now don't say a word. I can take care of two more, well's not. My young ones generally get enough to eat!"

When the doctor had come and gone, Mrs. Mulvaney took Alfred and Sally out to the fence.

"Now, children," said she, "I've got something hard to tell you, and we better get it over with. Your mother is took with fever and is going to the hospital. Now mind you don't make her feel worse'n she does. You speak up cheerful to her, do you hear? Tell her you're glad you can stay with Hannah and Chinkey. You can keep right on goin' to school, and we won't have no trouble. I wouldn't have you go to the poorhouse more'n I would my own young ones, and I'll treat you as if you was my own. Now if you don't speak up cheerful when you go back to your mother, you'll wish you had. Make her think she'll be well in a week. Now mind."

Alfred listened quietly, but his little sister sobbed and shivered. When Mrs. Mulvaney was gone, Alfred announced his intentions.

"Sally, we'll run away," he whispered.

"Where'll we run to?"

"I don't know, but we won't go to old Mother Mulvaney's, Sally, we won't."

"What else can we do, Alfred?"

"Run away, I tell you, and when we find a place to stay, we'll go to the hospital and tell mamma where we are, and if she dies —"

"Oh, Alfred, stop! She won't die, she mustn't die!"

Before their mother was taken away an hour later, Sally and Alfred, kneeling by her bedside, made several promises: they said they would stay with Mrs. Mulvaney; they would obey her and help her; they would be brave children and try to do right.

Sally cried as if her heart would break while her mother talked, but the child heard, remembered, and believed every word she said. Alfred heard and remembered, but he didn't believe God would take care of them all; he knew it could not be true.

The following day, when the landlord came for his rent, he put everything belonging to the Browns out-of-doors. Mrs. Mulvaney took care of all she could. What was left was sold to

the "Second-hand Man" around the corner. Sally and Alfred, watching from the window, saw what happened, and knew that they were homeless.

## CHAPTER IX.

### SALLY'S AIR - CASTLES

SALLY kept the promise to her mother: she did the best she could. At first living with the Mulvaney's was up-hill work, but in time it became easier.

"You see, Alfred," argued Sally, as they were walking home from school one night, "Mrs. Mulvaney's had lots of trouble. Think how lonesome she must be without Mr. Mulvaney. We ought to be as kind to her as we know how, because I s'pose she misses him dreadfully. Anyway, when I spoke of him once, she looked so queer I keep still about him now. And then, Alfred, there are smiling lines on Mrs. Mulvaney's face, if you know where to look for them. All around her eyes and across her forehead you'll see little puckery lines that show you how much she used to





'THEY WERE WALKING HOME FROM SCHOOL



smile. She isn't very cross to us, either, Alfred, you know that."

"She'll find out what she'll get if she ever touches you, Sally Brown. I couldn't stand it to see her strike you, nor I wouldn't! I'd give her one black eye, and then we'd run away."

"No, we wouldn't, Alfred, after what we promised mamma. She won't touch us if we try to be good. I've never been afraid of Mrs. Mulvaney, and only think how kind she is about your money when you offer it to her. She says every time, 'Keep it, child, keep all you earn to give your mother. If I need it, I'll ask you for it.'"

"That is good of the old lady," admitted the boy.

"Good, — it's lovely!" exclaimed Sally. "Why, I'd almost just as soon have her for my aunt. Let's walk faster. I'm afraid the children are in her way. I guess I'd be cross as she is if I had such wildcatty-acting children. They scratch and pull each other's hair and quarrel all the time. I've tried to tell them Sunday-school lessons and Golden Texts, but it don't do any good. They will keep still

and listen to made-up stories, though. I'm telling them about Christmas nowadays."

"Christmas!" echoed the boy. "Why, Sally Brown, I don't see how you can mention Christmas."

"Why not?"

"Because there won't be any Christmas for us!"

"Why not?"

"How could there be?"

"We've always had beautiful Christmasses!"

"Yes, Sally, long ago, but we may never have another until I get to be a man, I can tell you that!"

"Why, Alfred Brown, how you talk! I am sure we will have a beautiful Christmas, and the Mulvaney's will have a Christmas, too."

"Sally, I think you are crazy. How can you talk like that, when our mother is in the hospital with a fever, and may die before Christmas —"

"Stop, Alfred, don't talk so! Christmas won't be here for four weeks, and mamma'll be well by that time!"

"And if she is, where'll we have our Christmas?" Alfred continued. "Shall we have a tree in the old pig-pen in the alley, or shall we hang our stockings on the fence? How can you forget, Sally, that we haven't a place to call home, and if we had a home, we haven't even a chair to put in it!"

"Well, folks can get along without chairs," remarked Sally, "and I know when our mother gets well, she'll find a way to do, and anyway — I say my prayers."

"A lot of good that will do, Sally."

"Well, Alfred, if you didn't say your prayers, I guess you'd get pretty discouraged. Now, when I say in my prayers, 'Take care of our mother in the hospital, and when she gets well, give us a home to live in out in the country,' I feel happy as anything, and I know we'll surely have our home."

"We can't have any kind of a home, Sally, without money."

"Maybe we'll get a whole bag full of money, Alfred."

"How?"

"It may be given to us."

"When?"

"Christmas time, of course."

"Sally, I guess you're really crazy. Run along in the house to old Mother Mulvaney and tell her I'm waiting for the basket of clothes she told me to take home after school. I won't go in unless I have to. Why, Sally, what's the matter? What are you crying about? I didn't suppose anything would make you cry!"

"You're enough to make a potato cry," sobbed the little girl; "everything's dreadful and you're making it worse. My hands are most frozen, and my feet are, too. I've been trying to keep warm thinking of pleasant things, and you won't even let me do that! You're worse than the little Mulvaney, Alfred Brown, because they just love to think of nice things that might happen."

"Don't cry, Sally, don't!" besought her brother: but Sally cried harder and harder until Alfred was alarmed. "Why, little sister, stop it," he begged. "When I get bigger I'll buy everything for you and mamma, and we'll have Christmas trees on the Fourth of July if you want them. Don't cry, Sally! What will Mrs. Mulvaney think?"

"She's crying because she's cold," explained Alfred, as he pushed Sally ahead of him into the Mulvaney kitchen.

"She ain't used to it," sympathized Mrs. Mulvaney. "My young ones are complainin' of the cold to-night. There is room for you with the rest of 'em here by the stove, Sally."

Indeed there was room! Sally laughed through her tears as the little Mulvaney pulled her into their midst and gave her the warmest place by the fire.

"You're lovely folks," she said; "why, I'm warm already!"

## CHAPTER X.

### THE HOUSE WITHOUT A CHIMNEY

SALLY was the only child Mrs. Mulvaney ever met who showed no fear of her whatever.

“Oh, if she only wouldn’t scold,” was the little girl’s one thought. “Perhaps,” she would tell herself, “perhaps if we can make the house look nice, and the children will learn to be good, perhaps she won’t be such a scolder.” Acting on this impulse, Sally tried to wash the children’s hands and faces, but they made such a fuss she gave it up.

Once a week Mrs. Mulvaney called at the hospital to inquire for Mrs. Brown. Long afterward, Sally and Alfred knew that for days and days Mrs. Mulvaney dreaded to hear that their mother was dead. Whenever Mrs. Mulvaney was allowed to see Mrs. Brown, she reported the children well and happy, and said



that Sally was worth her weight in gold. At home she always told the children their mother was better and would soon be well.

While Mrs. Mulvaney was gone, Sally gave the children free lectures on keeping clean, helping their mother, and making the Other Room look nice. In the meantime, although the Other Room did look better after awhile, and the little Mulvaney's became a bit more civilized, Alfred and Sally grew each day more ragged and neglected. A week before Christmas a stranger would have believed them to be little Mulvaney's.

One thing surprised Sally. As the holiday season approached, Mrs. Mulvaney was crosser every hour. She slapped Stubbins, she spanked Johnnie; she kept Hannah and Chinkey howling from morning until night; Mike and the twins were whipped several times a day. All of which puzzled Sally.

"Why, this is the time of year when every one should be happy," she declared. "This is Christmas time!"

"Yeth, thith ith Chrithmath time," echoed Stubbins. "Thally thay tho, only Mike he thay Thanta Clauth won't nevvly, nevvly come here."

"Well, I'm not so sure about Santa Claus," admitted Sally, "but you see, children, everything that's lovely happens at Christmas time, because all the angels are looking down on the earth, and they can see poor children just as easy as they can see rich ones that live in the country."

"What maketh angelth thee uth when ith Chrithmath, Thally?"

"Why, Stubbins, I've told you the story over and over about how Jesus was born on Christmas day, and it's His birthday. You know I told you the angels came down on the earth and sang that Christmas morning. Now, Stubbins, Jesus loved little children, and when He lived here, He took little children up in His arms and said to them, 'Come unto me.' Now He's up in heaven don't you s'pose He thinks of us on His birthday? Well, I do, and I just know something beautiful will happen."

"Maybe he'll send Santa Claus down our chimney," suggested Hannah.

"No, he's sure to forget." Yet Chinkey looked earnestly at Sally as he spoke.

"Why, Chinkey?" asked Sally. "What makes you think so?"

"Because Santa Claus never came here. We never had a Christmas, Sally Brown, and I don't know of any other folks around here that ever did."

"Well, that's queer, Chinkey. Now, I'm not sure about Santa Claus, I only used to pretend believe in a really Santa Claus, but I'm sure that we'll have a Christmas just the same, because, children, Alfred and I always have the loveliest kind of a Christmas, and don't you s'pose God knows where we live now? Well, I guess so. And do you s'pose if we have our Christmas He'd leave you out? No, sir, Christmas will come to this very house; you just wait and see. We'll have more presents than we know what to do with. You just wait, I tell you."

"I know there's a Santa Claus all right enough," remarked Johnnie, "but he's a mean old scamp; he just gives things to folks that don't need anything more. I wish he would come down our chimney just once, though."

"Our chimney!" echoed Mike, "we ain't got no chimney."

"We have, too!" was Johnnie's retort.

"But we ain't got no chimney. Mike's right, sure enough," exclaimed Hannah.

"I'll go and thee," offered Stubbins. In a moment the child returned with a mournful face. "I falled down and thubbed my toe, and we ain't got any chimney. We ith got a thove-pipe!"

The children stared at one another. Sally was the first to speak.

"Of course, I remember now, I used to think last summer how funny it looked to see a long, high stovepipe sticking out of the roof."

"Santa Claus might come just the same if he wanted to," Nora pouted.

"He might come if he wanted to," agreed Dora.

"How?" demanded Chinkey. "Do you s'pose he could shin down a stovepipe?"

"That's a fact," added Hannah, "he couldn't get down a stovepipe, and if he'd tried a door or a window he knew what he'd get from pa. Maybe he don't know pa's dead."

"But you couldn't expect Santa Claus to come to a house without a chimney!" ex-

claimed Sally. "There's a chimney on the house we lived in, and the house is empty. Now, if there is a Santa Claus, he will think Alfred and I live there. Let me see, what can we do? I know, children: we'll write a letter to Santa Claus and tie it to the top of the chimney, and we'll say in the letter, 'We've moved: call at the next house; the Mulvaney's want a Christmas, too,' or something like that. I more than half-believe there is a Santa Claus, and if there isn't, it will be fun to play there is. I guess Alfred will have to climb up on the roof to tie the letter to the chimney."

"No, he'd fall," objected Chinkey. "I'll do it myself if you'll write the letter."

"Let's ask for what we want while we're about it," suggested Hannah. "I never had a Christmas present since I was born."

"Guess you ain't the only one," observed Johnnie.

"I ith cold," Stubbins complained.

"Me, too," added Mike, blowing on his fingers.

"Then let's write our letter now," Sally advised, "and ask Santa Claus to bring shoes and stockings and things. I know where

there's a piece of paper, and I'll ask your mother for her pencil."

"She'd bite my head off if I asked for her pencil," declared Hannah.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A LETTER TO SANTA CLAUS

"How shall I begin?" questioned Sally, as the little Mulvaney's crowded about her. "What shall I say? Hannah, why don't you write the letter?"

"He wouldn't look at it if I did, and anyway, I can't write letters."

"No, Sally's got to write it," insisted Johnnie. "Santa Claus knows her and Alfred. Just say 'Dear Santa Claus' for a starter."

"Of course, I've written that," Sally replied. "Now don't talk for a minute, children, while I think. This is what I shall say: 'Dear Santa Claus: You'll be surprised if you go down this chimney, because the house is empty, but the house next door is full. The Mulvaney's live in it. Alfred and I are living with them because our mother is in the hospital this Christ-

mas. You can't come down the Mulvaney chimney because the Mulvaney's haven't a chimney, only a stovepipe. We know you can't come down a stovepipe.' ”

Having written this, Sally stopped to think. “Where shall I tell him to leave our presents?” she asked. “Shall I say on the door-step?”

“Tell him to knock and ma'll let him in,” said Hannah.

“No, sir, don't you do it,” objected Mike, “he won't come near if you do.”

“Tell him we'll leave two tubs out in the yard,” said Chinkey, with a grin that stretched from ear to ear, “and if that ain't enough to hold everything he can pile the rest up under ma's window.”

“Stop making fun,” warned Hannah, “or maybe you won't get a thing.”

“Now I know,” exclaimed Sally. “Now I'll write some more. Do please keep still, children. I'll say, ‘We don't care where you leave our presents, Santa Claus, if we only get them. We will be sure to see what you leave because there will have to be so many things. There are seven Mulvaney children and a mother. The father is dead, so don't



leave anything for him. I will write down the names of the children and what they want. I won't say anything about shoes and stockings and mittens and warm clothes to wear, because we all want such things. We look like beggar children, but it can't be helped. Mrs. Mulvaney says we are lucky to get enough to eat, and I guess so, too.' "

"We ought to put ma's name down first," interrupted Chinkey.

"Why, yes," Sally agreed. "Let's all choose something for her. There! I've written her name, 'Mrs. Mulvaney.' Now, Chinkey, what do you want for her? I'll write it under her name."

"A nice new shawl and a new umbrell," announced Chinkey.

"Your turn, Hannah. I've written down the shawl and umbrella."

"A pink silk dress with a trail," was the prompt response.

Sally hesitated a moment before she wrote Hannah's choice.

"Your turn, Nora," she then said.

"A fur muff," Nora replied.

"Your turn, Dora."

"You wish for a pair of kid gloves," whispered Nora.

"I wish for a pair of kid gloves," echoed Dora.

"Now, Johnnie," Sally asked, "what do you want Santa Claus to bring to your mother?"

"A ice-cream freezer," was the announcement.

"Johnnie's got a head on him," declared Chinkey.

"It takes cream to make ice-cream with," Hannah chimed in. "I guess he won't have much ice-cream if ma does have a freezer."

"Your turn, Mike," was Sally's reminder.

"Goody!" shouted Mike. "I'll take a cow and a bottle of vanilly!"

Sally giggled, but the little Mulvaney's fairly screamed for joy.

"Wouldn't it be a joke if we get it all!" Sally put in, when she could make herself heard. "Where would we keep the cow? In the kitchen, I guess. Well, Stubbins, I almost forgot you. What do you want Santa Claus to bring to your mother?"

"Thauthageeth!"

"What?"

"Thauthageth, to eat!"



"He means sausages," Johnnie explained.  
"Put 'em down, Sally, we all like 'em."

It was nearly dark before the letter was finished. The list of things desired by the

little Mulvaney would have been longer had the scrap of paper been larger.

"We must leave some room for Stubbins. Now, what does Stubbins want Santa Claus to bring him?" Sally inquired. "Shall I say 'Bring Stubbins some pretty red shoes that will fit him?'"

"Naw!" protested Stubbins. "You thay Thubbinth want thauthageeth."

"Don't you want some toys, Stubbins, a little red cart, or something?"

"Thauthageeth!" roared Stubbins. "I ith want thauthageeth."

"You're a funny baby, I must say," remarked Sally, "but if you wish for sausages I s'pose you will have to have 'em. Now, children, please don't make so much noise while I finish this letter. I can't half-think, and it's getting too dark to see.

" 'DEAR SANTA CLAUS:— Stubbins thinks he don't want anything only sausages, but I do wish you would bring him some pretty clothes and some red shoes that will fit. Stubbins would be real sweet in a white dress and red shoes and white stockings. We all need

clothes, and Mrs. Mulvaney needs a big new wood-pile.

“ ‘ Alfred and I do not care for anything much this year, only a big bag full of money, so when our mother is well we can go straight to the country.

“ ‘ Yours truly,

“ ‘ SALLY BROWN.

“ ‘ P. S. — Please don’t make a mistake, Santa Claus, the house without a chimney next door is where the Mulvaney’s live. N. B. The one with a stovepipe sticking out through the roof.’ ”

“ Did you thay what I told you Thubbinth wanted? ” asked the little fellow, as Sally folded the letter.

“ Yes, Stubbins.”

“ I ith tho glad. Thubbinth give thome to Thally.”

## CHAPTER XII.

### STORE WINDOWS

"I wish, Sally," grumbled Mrs. Mulvaney, "that you'd keep these young ones out from under my feet. I can't turn around without half a dozen of 'em at my heels."

"Is it on 'count of Christmas you want them out of the way?" inquired Sally.

"What's Christmas got to do with us, I'd like to know?"

"Why, I thought, Mrs. Mulvaney, that perhaps you were getting some little presents ready to put in their stockings."

"Well, I never!" Mrs. Mulvaney sputtered. "Christmas ain't for the likes of us, Sally, so clear out!"

"Thally write a letter to Thanta Clauth all thame," ventured Stubbins, keeping beyond reach of his mother's arms, "and Chink tied

it to Thally's chimney, and we're going to get a Chrithmath!"

"You'll get something you won't like so well if you don't keep out from under foot," warned Mrs. Mulvaney. "Christmas! when it's all I can do to keep you from starving! If you don't behave I'll give the whole pack of you to Santa Claus if he comes, and glad I'll be to get rid of you. Clear out!"

"Would you give Thally to Thanta Clauth, too?" persisted Stubbins.

Mrs. Mulvaney, losing her patience, made a dive for Stubbins. Had the little fellow been barefooted he might have escaped, but the big shoes sent him sprawling at his mother's feet.

"Oh, don't thpank Thubbinth," begged the child. "Oh, ow — ow, ma, lemme go!"

"Stop your yelling: who's touched you?" asked Mrs. Mulvaney, as she lifted Stubbins from the floor and put him in the Other Room.

"I thought I wath going to get thpanked, ma, I ith tho glad I didn't. I thay Chrithmath ith comin'."

Mrs. Mulvaney returned to her tub. "Christ-

mas!" she remarked to the soapsuds. "Christmas, indeed!" Just then the sun came out and the soapsuds sparkled in the bright light. Mrs. Mulvaney's wash-tub became a foaming sea of jewels.

"I dunno why my youngsters shouldn't have a Christmas, after all," she continued, as the soapsuds changed from rose colour to emerald, and the sun still shone through the kitchen window.

At that moment Sally appeared in the doorway. "Mrs. Mulvaney," she began, "I've thought of a lovely plan. I want to take the children down-town and show them the store windows."

"They don't look fit to be seen," objected Mrs. Mulvaney, scattering the shining soapsuds with the wash-board as she spoke.

"But nobody will look at us, Mrs. Mulvaney, because everybody else is so busy looking in the windows, too. I've been down-town lots of times before Christmas, and you can't guess what fun it is to look at the pretty things and play what if some of them belonged to you. Please say yes."

"Well, I dunno's I care where you go if you



keep the young ones out of my way. Go long with you."

If Sally thought she and the little Mulvaney could go down-town without being noticed, she was mistaken. Wherever they went, folks stared at the queer group. Happier faces never were seen on the street than the faces of the little Mulvaney that week before Christmas. They were bright blossoms on ragged stems.

"Oh, ith nithe down-town," declared Stubbins, stopping in front of a meat-market. "Oh, look at the thauthageth, thee 'em, thee 'em!"

Although Sally and Hannah dragged Stubbins past the meat-market, he didn't forget the place, but insisted upon being taken there every afternoon.

"I'll tell you what's fun," suggested Sally; "we'll stand in front of a window and pick out presents for each other. We'll take turns, you know. We'll play buy each other presents. Here's a toy store. I'll buy that red cart for Stubbins. You mustn't forget the red cart's sold, you know. What are you going to buy, Hannah?"

"I'll buy that string of blue beads for you, Sally."

"I'll take that rocking-horse for Mike," exclaimed Johnnie, "and if he don't let me ride it he knows what he'll get."

"I say," put in Chinkey, "let's pick out things for ourselves. I want that shotgun."

"I'll buy that for you," remonstrated Sally, "don't you know we mustn't be selfish? Now I want that box of paints, but I wouldn't buy it for myself just before Christmas."

"I'll get you it," offered Mike.

"And I'll buy you that book to make pictures in," added Chinkey; "it says on the cover it's to paint in."

"Oh, thank you," murmured Sally, stamping her feet to get them warm. "You're such nice boys."

Mrs. Mulvaney had no reason to find fault with the children that week. They kept out of the kitchen. Day after day they trooped down-town to see the sights and buy presents. In front of the windows they laughed and shouted until the Christmas shoppers wondered how such ragged, neglected-looking children could be so happy.

In the window of a candy store was a toy donkey, always nodding its head. There it stood in the midst of the chocolate creams, nodding its head hour after hour through the busy day. Sally was much pleased with the donkey.

"Oh, Hannah," she said one afternoon, "let's ask the donkey if the Mulvaneys will have a Christmas."

"All right, sir," urged Mike, "ask him."

"Now, watch," advised Sally, "and we will see what the donkey thinks about it. Donkey, will the Mulvaneys have a Christmas?"

How the children danced and clapped their hands! How they laughed and shouted at the answer. The donkey not only nodded his head, but actually seemed to smile.

"Of course we'll have a Christmas," shouted Mike, "won't we, Stubbins?"

"Courth!" echoed Stubbins. "We'll have thome thauthageth, won't we, Thally?"

"Even sausages wouldn't surprise me, Stubbins," was the reply. "I just know something beautiful will happen."

One window pleased the little girls more than all the others. In it was a wonderful Paris doll. Children of the rich and poor

crowded together in the cold to admire the doll. The little Mulvaney's visited it every day.

"It can talk and cry and open and shut its eyes!" declared one little girl.

"And its golden hair is real!" added another.

"And did you ever see such a sweet, pink dress?" said a third.

"Well, I know one thing," said the little girl who had spoken first, "I know the doll won't be sold this Christmas. My mother says there never was such a high-priced doll in the city before. It costs a fortune."

When the three small girls were driven away in a carriage the little Mulvaney's found their tongues.

"She says it talks!" gasped Hannah.

"I've been thinking of something," whispered Sally. "You know the pretty girl that sells things down near this window?"

"Yes, Sally."

"Well, every time she sees us out here looking at the dolls she smiles. The store is almost empty now, because the town clock said six long ago, I guess that's the reason."

"She's looking out smiling now," interrupted Johnnie.

"Well, I'm going in," announced Sally, "and ask that doll a question. I'll say, is Christmas coming to the Mulvaney's?"

"Oh, do it, Sally, do it," begged Mike, "just for fun."

"I'll do it," agreed Sally, "if you'll all take hold of hands and stand right here while I go in, will you?"

The seven children promised, and Sally entered the store. The young lady leaned over the counter, as Sally approached.

"Well, little girl, what do you wish?" she asked.

"I want to know if it's true that doll can talk?"

"They call it a talking doll, little girl, — why?"

"May I ask it a question, please?"

"Certainly," replied the clerk, turning the doll so that it faced Sally. "Ask it any question you wish."

"Oh, thank you," Sally answered, and then, half-breathlessly, she asked this question:

"Doll, will Christmas come to the Mulvaneys?"

The clerk had to squeeze the answer out of the doll. She made it say "Y-yes" just as plainly as a doll ever talked in its life.

Sally flew to the waiting Mulvaneys. "It did truly say yes," she informed them. "Now let's go home, because to-morrow's Christmas."

"Yeth, and I'll get my thauthageath Chrith-math," agreed Stubbins.

On reaching the meat-market Stubbins refused to go a step farther until he had looked at the sausages and talked about them until the passers-by listened and smiled.

"Come on home, Stubbins," Sally begged. "We're all so cold. Maybe Santa Claus will bring you some to-morrow."

"I bet Santa Claus won't," grumbled Johnnie. "He never did give us a single thing, you want to remember."

"Oh, you must be the youngsters I'm looking for!" exclaimed a man who had been waiting on the corner for a street-car. "What luck! You stay here a minute while I step inside and get the sausages Santa Claus left for the little fellow. They're from Deerfoot

Farm, finest sausages on earth. I told Santa Claus to leave them at the market and I'd see that they were delivered. Bless my soul, you almost got away without your sausages!"

The man darted into the market, returning in a moment with a package so heavy Stubbins couldn't carry it. Nobody thanked the man. From Sally to Stubbins the children were too surprised for words.

"I guess Christmas is comin'," gasped Johnnie, at last.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CHRISTMAS EVE

“Good news, Sally, good news!” was Alfred’s greeting as the children burst into the kitchen.

“About mamma?” asked Sally, tumbling over Mike and Stubbins in her eagerness to hear more.

“Yes, Sally, they’re going to bring her here in a sleigh to-morrow, so she can have her Christmas dinner with us. Mrs. Mulvaney has just come from the hospital, and she says mamma looks almost well.”

“Oh, I’m so glad, I don’t know what to do,” exclaimed Sally, and by way of proving it she hugged and kissed Stubbins, and was about to seize Mike when he rebelled.

“Leggo!” he screamed. “You don’t need to kiss a feller just ‘cause you’re glad; quit that!”



In the meantime Hannah and Chinkey told their mother about the sausages.

"You see, ma," Johnnie put in, "there is a Santa Claus all right enough. I told you so!"

"We'll cook 'em for supper," were the first words Mrs. Mulvaney said when she recovered from her surprise.

At last the feast was ready, and the family gathered around the table. Stubbins ate sausages until Sally was alarmed.

"He'll kill himself, won't he?" she asked.

"Did any of us ever die from getting too much to eat?" asked Chinkey, reaching for another sausage.

"They are such little ones you could eat a hundred," remarked Hannah. "You could eat 'em if you could get 'em, I mean."

"What a family for jokes," said Alfred. He and Mrs. Mulvaney were thawing out under the influence of hope and sausages. Mrs. Mulvaney really smiled upon the noisy children.

"Now, children," she began, when the last sausage was gone, "Now I've got something to tell you."

"What's comin'?" questioned Chinkey, im-

pressed by an unusual tone in his mother's voice. "Keep still, kids, can't you, and listen."

"Is it good?" asked Hannah.



"It's about Christmas," replied Mrs. Mulvaney.

"Oh," cried Sally, "I just know what's coming now. We're going to have a lovely Christmas! I know it just as well as if I heard

Santa Claus saying 'Whoa' to his reindeer in front of the kitchen door. Don't you know it, too?"

"I ain't so sure of some things as I used to be," faltered Mrs. Mulvaney, and then to the surprise of all the children she buried her face in her apron and wept.

"She didn't cry a drop when pa died," whispered Hannah.

Stubbins tried to comfort his mother. "Tomorrowth Chrithmath, ma," he ventured.

"Oh, dear, you only made her cry harder," objected Sally. "Please don't cry, Mrs. Mulvaney, please don't. You've been so good to Alfred and me I can't bear to see you cry, 'specially when our mother is getting well and everything is so nice and Christmas-y. Oh, Mrs. Mulvaney, don't cry!"

"She wishes she had better young ones!" declared Hannah. "You told me so yourself once, Sally. I s'pose that makes her feel bad."

"Then don't cry, ma, and we'll all be good," promised Chinkey.

"You're good young ones, every last one of you," sobbed Mrs. Mulvaney. "You ain't

never had no chance. I started to tell you something and now I'll finish up. Somebody that's took a fancy to Sally's mother is going to send us a turkey dinner to-morrow, all cooked, cranberry sauce and mince pie and everything you ever heard tell of."

There were shouts of joy at such unexpected news. In the midst of the hilarity Hannah gave Sally a pinch. "Now's your chance," she whispered, "to ask ma to let us go to the church show Alfred was telling about."

"All right, I'll do it; but it isn't a show, Hannah, it's an entertainment. They are going to have a Christmas tree, and the children are going to speak pieces and sing. I spoke a piece to a Christmas tree once when I was a little bit of a girl in the country."

Mrs. Mulvaney listened quietly to Sally's request until Alfred interrupted.

"Now, Sally," he remonstrated, "that church is for rich folks. You can't go, they don't want us there."

"Look a-here," Mrs. Mulvaney put in, "this is a free country, ain't it? I guess a cat can look at a king if it ain't. You can go, children, and I'll help you fix up. You'll have

to wash some, but you can go, and Alfred'll take you."

"I'll walk behind 'em," grumbled the boy, "but I won't be seen with such a raft of young ones, and I won't go in the church with them. It's no place for poor folks; they'll put you out, you'll see!"

"Never mind what Alfred says," Sally advised, "we'll have a good time. You know, children, it's Christmas eve."

Mrs. Mulvaney washed the children's faces; she didn't bother with necks and ears: she washed their hands, but their wrists were left untouched.

"Comb out your hair, boys," she commanded. "I am going to hunt up some hair-ribbons for the girls. Your heads'll look like pictures, Hannah, if your dresses are ragged. I'd sew you up if I had time."

"I didn't know the girls had any ribbons," remarked Sally. "I've tied their hair with strings or anything I could find, and I've been the hair-comber ever since I came."

"We ain't got no hair-ribbons," Hannah replied; "we didn't have none for pa's funeral,

even. Ma crimped our hair, though, and it looked awful pretty, didn't it, ma?"

"It'll show off prettier to-night," answered her mother, looking through the contents of a box she kept under her bed. "Here's what I'm after," and Mrs. Mulvaney displayed a bit of turkey-red calico. "I've been saving it to piece up in a quilt," she explained, "but, bless me, what's the use? I don't get no chance to leave my piano long enough to do fancy work. It's pretty cloth, ain't it?"

"You bet!" Chinkey replied. "Here's your comb, ma."

Mrs. Mulvaney cut four wide ribbons for the twins, and braided their hair in pigtails, two for each little girl.

"The cloth's been starched, and that's why it's so nice for bows," she said. "Now, Sally, wouldn't you say them was satin ribbons if you didn't know?"

"Honestly," replied Sally, "they do look like truly ribbons.—don't keep feeling of 'em, girls, or you'll spoil 'em."

"Come here, Hannah and Sally," Mrs. Mulvaney said, in cheerful tones. "I guess you girls will look more stylish with your hair left

hanging. I'll tie you some bows, though, on the side of your heads, so they'll show. There! how fine you'll look.

"Chinkey, take Stubbins out in the kitchen and put a mite of coal oil on his hair and smooth it down. There's nothing like trying to slick up once in awhile, now ain't that so?"

"First time we've been slicked up since pa died," Hannah whispered to Sally.

"What you giggling about, Hannah?" demanded Chinkey. "Alfred thinks you're a goose."

"I guess Alfred don't want us to have a good time," laughed Sally.

"I do, too," protested the boy, "but I say that church is no place for any of you. It's only for rich folks. They'll turn you out and you'll come home bawling. I know just how it'll be. I'll walk behind you all the way to the church, only I don't want one of you kids to turn around and pretend that you know me. I'll wait around outside the church for you."

"You'll catch your death of cold," cried Sally.

"Don't you worry," sniffed Alfred, "you won't be in that church more'n two minutes."

“Don’t listen to him,” advised Sally, turning a smiling face upon her followers. “They won’t turn little children out of a church on Christmas eve! Good-bye, dear Mrs. Mulvaney. Aren’t we glad it’s Christmas eve?”



## CHAPTER XIV.

### HOW THE LITTLE MULVANEYS MET SANTA CLAUS

THE church doors were wide open. Hand in hand Sally and the little Mulvaneys passed from cold and darkness into the warmth and light within. Music filled the church, the music of heaven, Sally whispered to Hannah. Unnoticed in the crowd, the children pushed their way along the outside aisle, nearer and nearer the great pipe-organ and the Christmas tree. Even Sally was dumb before the splendour of that sparkling tree.

Unnoticed still, the children stood, a bewildered group, in the very front of the church. Behind them were the children of the Sabbath school, restless and happy. Neither Sally nor Hannah caught a glimpse of the dainty gowns and fluttering ribbons of the little ones. They saw only the tree and heard only the music.

When the choir began their Christmas carol, the little Mulvaney's were not sure whether they were on earth or in heaven. During the prayer that followed they bowed their heads as Sally did. Stubbins alone kept his eyes upon the tree, whose central glory was the talking doll — the same doll that said the Mulvaney's should have a Christmas. Long before the "Amen" and the subdued response by the choir, the doll was smiling upon Stubbins from the depths of the drooping branches.

"I'd like to kith that doll," Stubbins whispered to Sally when the prayer was ended.

"Hush, hush," warned Sally.

The doll continued to smile, and Stubbins, sure that no one would see, threw it a kiss.

Close, close together huddled the little Mulvaney's, listening to recitations and songs by white-robed children, listening, yet scarcely understanding, conscious only of warmth and blissful happiness. The little ones on the platform above them might have been tiny angels straight from heaven, so unlike the children of the street were they.

When the Sunday-school superintendent began his speech, the little Mulvaney's became

interested. He told them the old, old story of the Babe that was born in the manger one Christmas day, long, long ago. Sally had told them that story of the Christ-child over and over. As they listened, the little Mulvaney half-expected to hear the angel voices singing once again, "Glory be to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men."

At the close of his speech the superintendent thanked the children for the baskets full of toys and warm clothing they had sent in.

"If Santa Claus looks after the poor children in our city," the superintendent said, "he not only needs the help we can give him, but he will be kept busy."

"He'll go to our house, sure," Johnnie whispered, his face radiant.

"Sure!" echoed Mike.

"As Santa Claus will have so much to do," continued the superintendent, "we felt that he would have no time to come here, so —"

There was a sound of sleigh-bells, then a loud "Whoa!" The next second Santa Claus appeared, looking as if he had driven straight from the North Pole. Icicles fell from his beard as he brushed the snow from his scarlet

coat and wished the children a Merry Christmas.

Sally's eyes grew round as saucers. "Why, why," she whispered, "that's really Santa Claus!"

"Guess we know it," replied Hannah, standing upon her tiptoes.

"Why don't you tell us some news?" asked Chinkey.

"Bet half the presents on that tree are for us!" Johnnie suggested.

"You bet!" assented Mike.

Santa Claus made a jolly speech, and then, turning to the superintendent, he said, "Now I'm ready to present the gifts with which I've loaded this tree. If you will take them off the branches I can tell in a minute who they are for, and my Brownies will take them to the children."

Santa Claus blew a tiny whistle and in trooped a dozen Brownies.

"When I call your names, children," continued Santa Claus, "just raise your hands, or speak, so my Brownies may find you without any trouble. Time's precious to-night."

"You speak right up, Stubbins," advised

Chinkey, "when you hear Santa Claus say 'Stubbins Mulvaney.'"

"You bet!" exclaimed Stubbins.

Strange as it may seem, there wasn't a thing on that tree for the Mulvaney — not so much as a ball of pop-corn. One by one the gifts were distributed until there was nothing left on the tree but the Paris doll. The poor little Mulvaney were ready to cry.

"I never was so disappointed in my life," confessed Sally. "You wouldn't think he would forget us, would you?"

Just then the superintendent passed the doll to Santa Claus, smiling as he did so. The church became perfectly still. Even the babies wondered who would get the doll. Santa Claus walked to the edge of the platform with the doll in his arms, and then in the breathless silence he read this name:

"Sally Brown!"

"Oh," cried Sally, with outstretched arms. "Here I am, Santa Claus, right down here with the Mulvaney! I didn't dream that doll was for me!"

"Bless my soul, little girl!" exclaimed Santa Claus, when he saw the little Sally all in rags.

"Bless my soul, but I'm glad a doll is going to the right place once! Here, take it, child."

Scarcely had Sally's arms closed around the wondrous doll when the superintendent crossed the platform and touched Santa Claus upon the shoulder.

"I fear you have made a mistake," said he; "the doll wasn't intended for the child you gave it to. Let me speak to the little girl."

Tenderly Santa Claus lifted Sally over the evergreen bank and placed her upon the platform.

"What's your name, little girl?" asked the superintendent.

"Why, my name is Sally Brown," she answered. "Santa Claus knows."

"But you don't belong to our Sunday school, do you, little girl?"

"No, sir," was the reply, and the more frightened Sally became, the tighter she hugged the doll.

"Well, little girl, it's too bad," said the superintendent. "but the doll isn't for you, it is for a little Sally Brown who belongs to our Sunday school."

"But Santa Claus gave me the doll, so of

course it's for me," insisted poor Sally, beginning to cry in spite of her faith in the good saint.

A boy sprang upon the platform then, a manly little fellow, who brushed past Santa Claus with scant ceremony.

"Give them back their old doll, Sally," he entreated, "give it back, and come home with me. I knew how they would act here, and I came in to see fair play, and I'm glad I did! Come home, and when I'm a man, I'll buy you a better doll than this!"

Down in the pews was a dear little girl whose life had known nothing but happiness. She was a lovely child, unspoiled by luxury. When her Uncle Jack came from Chicago on Christmas eve, and said to her, "Sally, is there anything you wish that you fear Santa Claus may not bring you?" Sally had answered, "Yes, Uncle Jack, the talking doll from Paris."

When this little Sally Brown saw the doll on the tree, she knew Uncle Jack had bought it for her. Oh, how pleased she was when her name was called. Then, when she saw her ragged little namesake on the platform

with the doll in her arms, a great pity stole into her heart.

"Oh, Uncle Jack, what shall I do?" she whispered. "I want the doll, oh, I do want it! What shall I do? Shall I let her keep it?"

"Do as you think best, dearest," answered Uncle Jack, but he put his arms around the little girl, and the angels of Christmas must have hovered near.

"Lift me up high, Uncle Jack," she begged.

"Yes, Sally," said the superintendent, noticing the child. "We know the doll is yours; you shall have it."

Again the church was still, and in the hushed moment the child replied, pointing toward Sally on the platform, "Tell her to keep it. The doll is for her. She is the right Sally Brown."

The audience rose to its feet, and such a clapping of hands was never heard in that church before. Alfred urged his sister to leave the platform, but she, smiling through her tears, lifted her face to Santa Claus.

"You forgot the Mulvaney!" she reminded him.

"Bless my stars, are the Mulvaney here?"



"Yes," answered Sally, "they are right down here in front."

Santa Claus leaned over the evergreen bank, and nearly tumbled off in his surprise when he saw the Mulvaney's. He raised his hands for silence.

"Kind friends," said he, "this little girl isn't the only one."

Then he lifted the seven upon the platform. What wonder that the audience laughed at so unexpected a sight.

"Shake hands, little folks, shake hands," urged Santa Claus, as the room became quiet.

"You didn't give us nothin'," said Mike, extending first one hand, then the other, and finally offering both.

"I didn't know you were going to be here," Santa Claus replied. "I didn't expect the Mulvaney's!"

"You never did give us nothin'," Hannah chimed in, not wishing to miss such a chance.

"There has been a mistake somewhere," Santa Claus insisted. "Kind friends," he continued, this time addressing the congregation, "we cannot send these little ones away empty-handed. Who is willing to help Santa Claus

give these strangers a merry Christmas? I see all the children looking at my pack. Young friends, I hate to confess it before so many, but my pack is stuffed with straw! I'll show you!"

In the midst of much laughter, Santa Claus untied his pack and beckoned the Mulvaney's to look in.

"Disappointed, eh? Well, I don't wonder," he sympathized. "We'll see what we can do for the baby first. Come here, little fellow, don't be afraid."

"His name's Stubbins," Hannah whispered, as Santa Claus took the child in his arms.

"Now, my young friends of the Sabbath school, I wish to introduce to you my neglected friend, Stubbins Mulvaney," announced Santa Claus. "How many of you will follow Sally Brown's example, and will help me by giving him a few of your presents? My Brownies will gather up your offerings."

"What does he want?" asked a big boy several rows back of the infant class.

Santa Claus tried to find out, but Stubbins, in a fit of bashfulness, hid his face. "I guess anything would be acceptable," observed Santa

Claus, shaking his head as he pointed toward the shoes Stubbins wore, the little elbowless coat, and the bare knees sticking through the ragged trousers.

"He can have my horn," offered a little fellow on the front seat.

"And my ball," said another.

When the Brownies began bringing gifts to Stubbins, Santa Claus put him down. In a few minutes the little fellow's arms were full of toys he never dreamed of owning, and the Brownies were piling more treasures at his feet.

"Thay, Thanta Clauth," Stubbins remonstrated, "it ith time to thop, don't you thee? I ith got enough!"

Santa Claus took the hint, and the six waiting Mulvaney's were then showered with gifts. There was much whispering and laughing in the church, much running of children to their mothers for permission to give away things they would never have thought of parting with at any other time.

At last Santa Claus turned to Sally. Alfred had disappeared.

“Now, little girl,” said he, “what can we do for you?”

Sally hesitated. “If you could give it to me yourself, I would tell you in a minute,” said she, “because you are Santa Claus, and I didn’t really believe there was a Santa Claus before, but I don’t want the church-folks to give me what I wish.”

“Oh,” Santa Claus hastened to say, “the church-folks are only lending to Santa Claus, little girl. They enjoy that; do you see how happy they look?”

Only the big man in the scarlet coat and the superintendent heard the story Sally quickly told, of the mother in the hospital and the dreamed-of country home.

“So you see,” finished Sally, “all I ask for is a bag of money — that is all!”

“You’ll get it!” exclaimed Santa Claus. Then he made a speech which was greeted by cheer upon cheer.

When the doors were once more thrown open and music floated out upon the night, Sally stood like one in a dream, holding in both hands her bag of money.

“Thally,” whispered Stubbins, tugging at

her dress, "leth go home! Ma don't know that Chrithmath hath come! Hannath holding your doll, don't you thee?"

"Oh, you dear Stubbins," cried Sally, giving him a hug at the risk of breaking some of the toys in his arms, "I'd forgotten the doll and all of you for a minute. I'm so happy I can only think of mamma and the Christmas angels!"

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